

Iranian Premier Rajai Defends Pact on Hostages Against Rival's Criticism

By James Delgheath
Bureau

TEHRAN, Jan. 26 — Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Rajai defended his government today against Iranian criticism of the deal with Washington that secured freedom for the American hostages.

Outlining the accord to the Majlis, Iran's parliament, he said no other agreement could have "extracted more undertakings from the United States than 'the deprived and revolutionary nation of Iran.'"

His government had followed the release conditions laid down by the Majlis, he said, and he asked those who complained that Iran had got less than it deserved to consider that they had not made any better suggestions for its return.

The Iranian Central Bank still did not have a complete list of the fortune of the shah and his relatives after working on it for the past year, Rajai said, and thus Iran was asking for something whose exact size and nature was unknown.

Washington agreed under the deal to freeze all assets of the shah and his relatives in the United States and to require anyone possessing such assets or knowledge of them to tell the administration.

In reply to criticism that Iran had asked Washington only to guarantee future noninterference in Iranian affairs with no mention of alleged past involvement, Rajai said:

"America ... never accepts to admit previous intervention, even at the price of 52 people."

President Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, who has said he was not kept in the forefront of the final stages of the hostage negotiations, asked today in an interview with the newspaper Mizan whether Iran had succeeded in recovering its frozen assets and the wealth of the late shah.

The newspaper Islamic Revolution, which Bani-Sadr controls, yesterday

challenged the government's view that Iran had got all it sought.

Rajai attacked people who argued that Iran's problems all stemmed from the seizure of the hostages in November 1979. He called them counter-revolutionary.

Majlis Speaker Hojatoleslam Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said Rajai's cabinet had done its best in the hostage negotiations.

Asked what Iran would do if Washington did not fulfill its part of the deal, he said: "I do not think they would be so unwise."

Rafsanjani denied allegations that some hostages had been mistreated, saying "I know most of them [the radical Muslims who held the hostages] and I am sure that they are not the sort of people who would do such a thing. Of course, if one of the hostages wanted to escape and they fired on it or hit him when they arrested him, that is not what I would call torture."

In his address to the Majlis, Rajai said "If the U.S. doesn't want to meet its undertakings, its guilty face will be shown to the world even more than before."

In response to criticism that Iran had recovered less than \$3 billion of its frozen assets, he said this was what was left from \$8 billion after repaying all Iran's loans from U.S. banks and placing money with Algeria, which acted as go-between for settlement of claims between Iran and the United States.

Iran originally asked the United States for \$24 billion in guarantees that it would carry out the Majlis conditions of noninterference, dropping all legal claims against Iran and returning its frozen assets and the late shah's fortune.

"The whole amount of Iranian assets is about \$8 billion, from which we should pay our loans completely," Rajai said.



MOHAMMAD ALI RAJAI
... defended by Majlis speaker

Iraqis Say Kurdish Guerrillas Strike Iranian Troops Behind War's Front

Bureau

SULAIMANIYA, Iraq, Jan. 26 — Iranian Kurdish guerrillas are striking at Iranian troops from mountain bases behind Iraq's front line in the Persian Gulf war, Iraqi military officers said today.

The officers, interviewed by Western correspondents at a front-line position inside Iranian territory in the rugged Kurdistan region, said Baghdad was backing Kurdish demands for greater autonomy from the Tehran government.

They insisted, however, that the well-known Pesh Merga Kurdish guerrillas were not fighting under Iraqi direction.

"They have their own fight against [Ayatollah Ruhollah] Khomeini," said an Iraqi major who would not give his name.

Reporters saw several dozen guerrillas in two mountain villages now occupied by Iraqi forces.

The guerrillas, wearing their traditional heavy pantsloves, embroidered waistcoats and black and white headscarves, were armed with both Soviet-designed Kalashnikovs and U.S.-made M16 rifles.

Western reporters were escorted by the Iraqi Army during the weekend to the Iranian village of Nowsad, 50 miles southeast of this Iraqi market town.

Both Iran and Iraq have attempted to harness Kurdish discontent since the Persian Gulf war started in September.

The Kurdish people live in a mountain region spanning northern Iraq, northern Iran and parts of Syria, the Soviet Union and Turkey.

In December Iraqi President Saddam Hussein said he had extended the battle front from the deserts in the south all the way up to the Turkish border. But there have been no reports since then of fighting farther north than Nowsad.

The Iraqis say they seized control of two strategic passes near Nowsad and Pezgin to the north to prevent Iranian cross-border raids.

The Kurdish problem is one of the causes of the war, Iranian support under the late shah for a rebellion against Baghdad by Iraqi Kurds in the early 1970s forced the Iraqi government into signing a 1975 agreement with Iran.

Iraq unilaterally abrogated the agreement just before the war began. Under the accord, Iran said it would abandon support for the Iraqi Kurds in return for a new border agreement between the two countries.

Now Iraq is fighting to recover what it calls usurped border territory.

Evidence of ruthlessness in the fight against the Kurds was shown in the mountains southeast of this Iraqi Kurdish cultural center and university town.

Reporters were invited at a hilltop fortress constructed from the rubble of a farming community destroyed during the Kurdish revolt.

In a speech last month, Saddam Hussein said total casualties in the Kurdish rebellion, which ended in 1975, were 80,000 dead and injured including 16,000 regular troops.

After the revolt Iraq established what it called an autonomous region for the Kurds, who elected their own assembly last September.

Because of the history of enmity between Baghdad and the Kurds, Iraqi officers say they do not entirely trust their new-found Iranian comrades-in-arms.